

FIGURE 1

Santa Barbara's waterfront district has long been the recreational and tourist center of the city. Lying in the middle of this district is the site for Fess Parker's Park Plaza Project. (Courtesy Santa Barbara Planning)

2. The Santa Barbara Park Plaza Project: The Pre-Parker Years

Anita O. Aviles

The seashore land along Cabrillo Boulevard between State Street and the eastern city limit has long been attractive to land developers and local environmentalists. Over the years developers have viewed this area as a wasteland with profitable potential to benefit the community if improved. In the 1860s efforts were begun to drain the large estero, or estuary which then spread inland from what is now the East Beach area. In the 1860s and 1870s proposals were made to dredge the marshland and convert it into a harbor. This idea proved too costly, however, and the area was subsequently used for a fairground and racetrack through the 1890s, and in later years as the city dump. In 1924 an option to purchase 1,500 feet of land along the seashore boulevard eastward from the wharf was acquired by a group of out-of-town real estate operators for the establishment of a commercial zone.¹ The 1924 development effort never materialized, however, and previous activities in the area never established permanent uses for the parcel. During most of this century, industrial activity in the

area has centered around the Southern Pacific railroad and its shops and roundhouse.

In 1886 the Southern Pacific had obtained an east-west right-of-way through a portion of land north of and paralleling what is now Cabrillo Boulevard. On April 14, 1887, the railroad petitioned for the closure of the portions of Carpinteria, Quinientos, Mason and Yanonali Streets which ran through its land for the construction of track, freight yards, engine houses and a depot. Three months later the City Council granted the railroad's request. Over the next twenty years the Southern Pacific acquired more land in the East Beach area. By 1905 the company owned a long rectangular tract of property between Cabrillo Boulevard and what is now Highway 101, bounded by Santa Barbara Street on the west and Milpas Street on the east. The Southern Pacific's operations on this property served as the midway maintenance point for the railroad's Los Angeles to San Francisco run until the steam engine was replaced by the diesel locomotive in the late 1950s and early 1960s.² Since that time much of this property has remained virtually unused. Gradually, some railroad facilities were removed, and buildings devoted to light industries abandoned, altered for different uses or destroyed. This left a large, vacant tract of land to the north of Cabrillo Boulevard.

In 1912, while the Southern Pacific was servicing trains on its waterfront property, civic minded groups were seeking to convert East Beach land into parks and ban future commercial and industrial activity on Southern Pacific land.³ In 1913 E.A. Gilbert, President of the city's

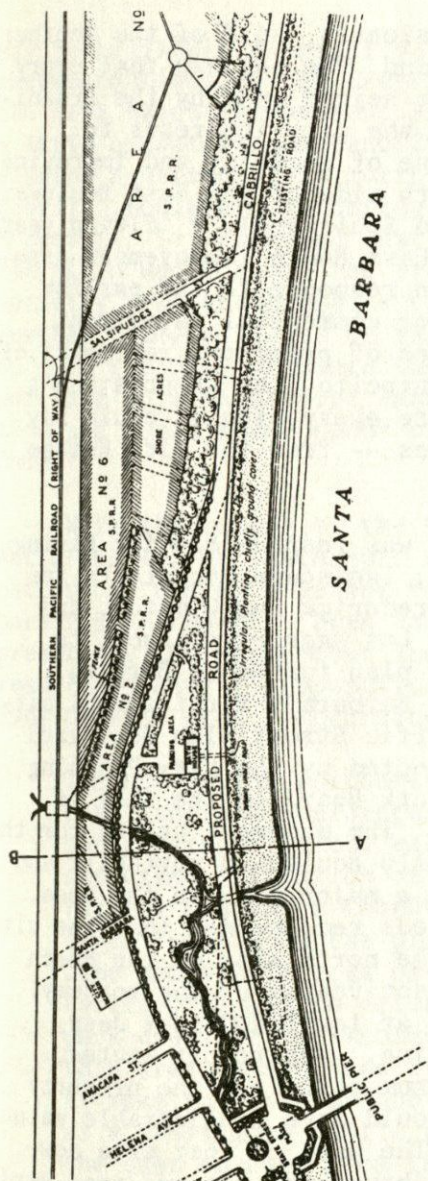


FIGURE 2

In 1924 Charles H. Cheney and the Olmsted Brothers were commissioned by the East Beach Improvement Association to design a development plan for Santa Barbara. The map above depicts the Cheney and Olmsted plans for the land bounding Cabrillo Boulevard.

(Source: Survival Times, Vol. 3, No. 1.)

Board of Park Commissioners, said of the Southern Pacific waterfront land, "we believe that every opportunity should be seized upon by the organization looking after the city interests to strengthen the purpose of securing and improving a parkway on the north side of the East Boulevard [the present Cabrillo Boulevard]."4 Eleven years later, in 1924, the East Beach Improvement Association was formed in response to the earlier described movement for commercial waterfront development. Composed of prominent residents of Santa Barbara and Montecito, the Association's purpose was to "secure everything it could buy for City Park purposes -- from the Bird Refuge to State Street."5

The Association was responsible for hiring the Olmsted Brothers, landscape architects and sons of the famous Frederick Law Olmsted, and Charles M. Cheney, a Los Angeles planner, to design a development plan for Santa Barbara. The result was Santa Barbara's first formal city plan, the "Major Traffic Street Plan Boulevard and Park System," adopted by the City Planning Commission and the Park Board in the fall of 1924 (see Figure 2). The document called for the realignment of Cabrillo Boulevard northward and the establishment of a major park in the area. Cheney and the Olmsteds recommended that the city acquire land along the north side of the beach to preserve the attractiveness of the roadway. The parcel was to be at least 200 feet deep, back from the shoreline. The report stated, "Back of such a minimum strip all the property up to the railroad would have considerable value for park purposes...The part of that area now occupied by the roundhouse and the railroad yard

may be available eventually."⁶ Following the recommendations of the Cheney and Olmsted plan, the East Beach Improvement Association purchased a strip of waterfront land 200 feet deep, including a narrow strip north of the present Cabrillo Boulevard bordering the Southern Pacific property. It was hoped that trees planted along the strip would block the train maintenance activity from the public's view and prevent further commercial use of the land. On November 4, 1925 the city of Santa Barbara was able to purchase this waterfront land from the Association and begin development of the present Palm Park.⁷

With the coming of the Great Depression and World War II, philanthropic and community interest groups played a lesser role in Santa Barbara's development. Eventually, a concern for preserving the waterfront and expanding parkland resurfaced during preparation of the city's 1964 General Plan. According to this document,

The use of the northerly frontage on East Cabrillo Boulevard extending from Santa Barbara Street easterly to the approximate location of the Southern Pacific Company's Roundhouse to a depth limited by the present main line and spur tracks of the Southern Pacific, should be oriented to beach park use. It is recommended that this area be acquired by the City at some future time and be developed as a landscaped public park, opening the same to view from the Boulevard and moving the screen planting to the

rear of the area, thus screening the railroad from view of the beach. The use of Palm Park could thus be expanded to the north of Cabrillo Boulevard, and complement the public use of the East Beach as a greater resort attraction.⁸

Although the text of the General Plan encouraged an increase in parkland in the East Beach area, the accompanying map depicted a convention center, a hotel-residential district and a park on Southern Pacific property north of Cabrillo Boulevard. It was not until 1971 that proposals were made to reconcile inconsistencies between the 1964 General Plan text and map.

Following the release, in December 1970, of Albert Keisker's "Economic Base Analysis" of Santa Barbara, and the Report of the Citizens General Plan Goals Committee of April 1971, Simon Eisner, the consultant for the 1964 General Plan, recommended several amendments to his earlier work. Among the proposed changes, released for hearings in November 1971, was a revised plan for the waterfront:

The waterfront area of the City of Santa Barbara, extending over 3 miles from the bird refuge to the mesa bluffs, is uniquely important to the economic base of the City and plays a major role in setting the character and quality of the community...

To take best advantage of the amenities offered by the shoreline, adjacent lands must also be carefully planned for appropriate uses and activities. The railroad yards and main line, the heavy industrial uses and the sewer treatment plant now located close to Cabrillo Boulevard must eventually be relocated to more appropriate areas and the land freed by this be converted to shoreline oriented uses.⁹

In addition, the convention center to be located on Southern Pacific property was removed from the General Plan map, although discussion of such a project was expanded in the General Plan text:

Considerable interest has been generated within the community over the last several decades concerning the prospects of establishing a high quality, large capacity, performing arts auditorium and a public assembly building suitable for medium size conference and local service club meetings...As an example, a conference hall with a capacity of 1,000 to 1,600 visitors can only realize its full potential when located within a reasonable distance, preferably walking distance, from adequate hotel-motel accommodations.¹⁰

Three possible sites for this type of development were then suggested in the Plan, one of which

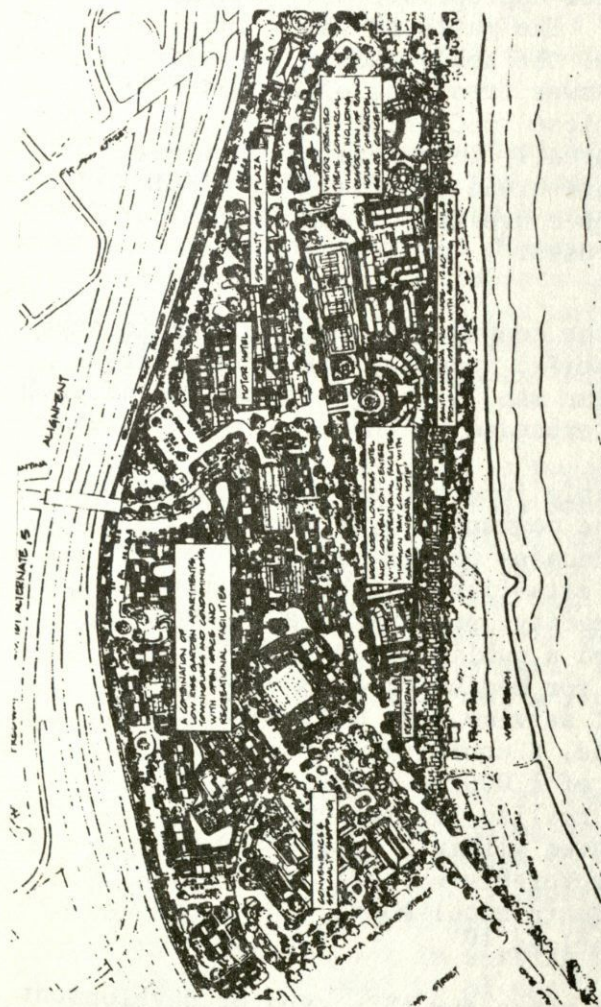


FIGURE 3

On February 15, 1972 the Southern Pacific-American Communities presented plans for the development of its property. The plans included a 1,000-guest hotel, 2,000-seat conference center and a Ghirardelli Square-type of commercial village. (Source: Survival Times, Vol. 3, No. 1.)

was "Lower State Street between the freeway and Cabrillo Blvd."¹¹

On February 15, 1972, three months after the 1971 General Plan amendments were presented, the San Francisco-based Southern Pacific Land Company and its Los Angeles subsidiary, American Communities-Santa Barbara Inc., appeared before the Santa Barbara City Council to present plans for the development of their waterfront property. The Southern Pacific-American Communities' (SP-AC) \$72 million project included the construction of a luxury Hyatt Hotel to accommodate 1,000 guests and a convention center to seat 2,000. A commercial village, similar to San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square, was to be built, along with a plaza for shops and offices, apartments, townhouses and condominiums. The developers' plan also called for the creation of 400 off-street parking spaces and the realignment of Cabrillo Boulevard to the north to allow for a mile-long promenade extending west from the roundhouse (see Figure 3). Response to the project's overall design among City Council members was favorable. That body voted unanimously to support the proposal's general concept, and gave the developers approval to proceed with preparing specific plans for the first phase of the project.¹² While the initial reaction of the City Council and public was supportive of the SP-AC project, environmentally-minded citizens began to voice their concerns about the proposed East Beach development. The controversy would soon sharpen.

On August 7, 1972, six months after the original presentation of plans to the City

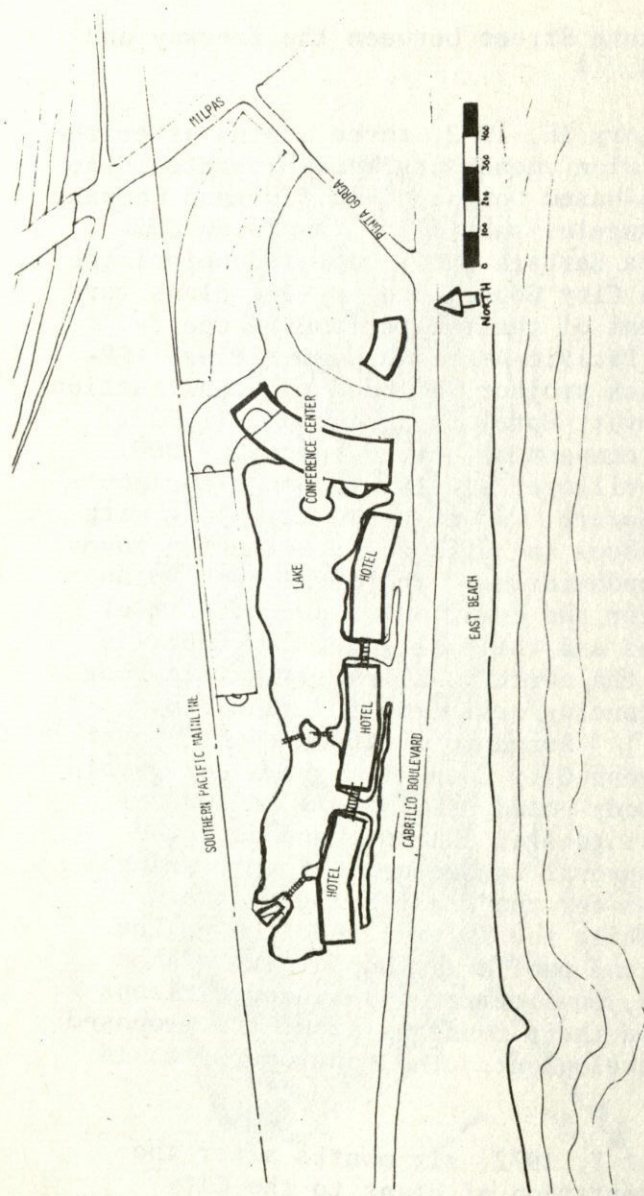


FIGURE 4

In the fall of 1972 the Southern Pacific-American Communities revised its hotel and conference center plans. The new project was scaled down to 500 rooms and a 1,500-seat conference center along with the creation of a man-made lake. (Source: *Survival Times*, Vol. 3, No. 1.)

Council, the Southern Pacific-American Communities released revised plans. The \$15 million project was scaled down to a 500-room hotel and a 1,500-seat conference center, with the height of the buildings restricted to three stories, or 45 feet. The complex would include shops, four restaurants and penthouses. A ten-acre man-made lake would allow for boating, fishing and swimming. The grounds were to be fully landscaped and a bridge constructed over Cabrillo Boulevard to connect the project and the beach. The new plan made no mention of the mile-long promenade and the realignment of the boulevard (see Figure 4).¹³ Immediately after the presentation of this design, a citizen action group, the Committee to Save Santa Barbara, mounted the first organized public opposition to the design by publicly releasing an alternative plan for waterfront development.

The Committee to Save Santa Barbara, previously called the Committee to Save East Beach, had been formed in response to the February unveiling of SP-AC development plans. This organization of concerned residents was aided in its work by other citizen groups such as the Community Environmental Council, by public agencies, and by local professional planners. Through the combined efforts of these people the Committee developed the above-mentioned conceptual alternative to the SP-AC project.¹⁴ On August 8, 1972, the day after the SP-AC plan had been submitted, the Committee presented its proposed plan to the City Council. Its design for East Beach development called for a smaller hotel and conference center than were proposed by the SP-AC. The

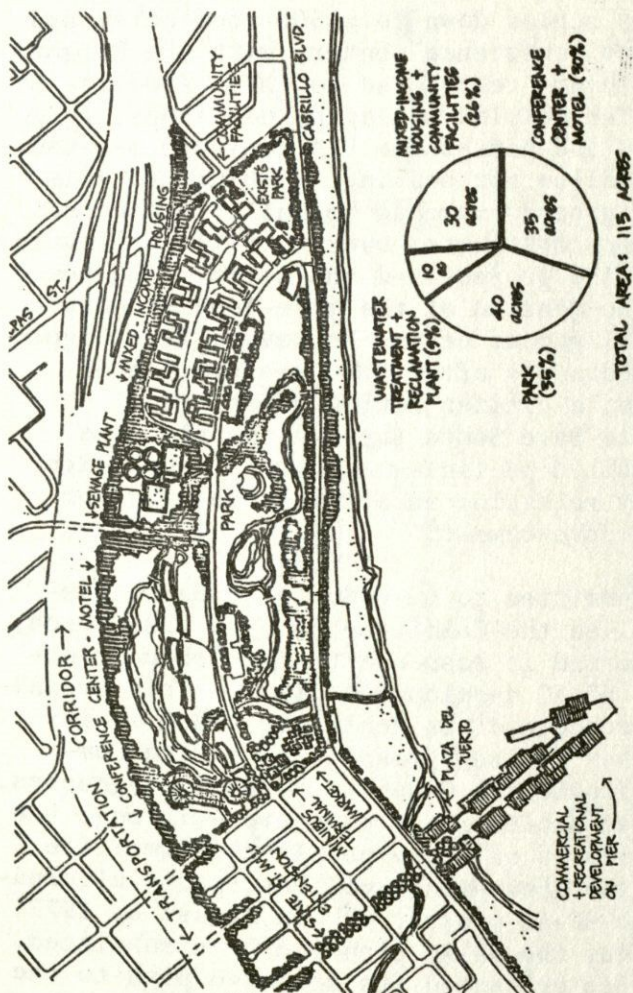


FIGURE 5

While the SP-AC was modifying its original development plans, the Committee to Save Santa Barbara created an alternative development plan for the Southern Pacific property and the entire East Beach development.

(Source: *Survival Times*, Vol. 3, No. 1)

creation of lower income housing instead of high priced rental units was stressed. In addition, the Committee brought up a new concept by revising an old idea: it suggested that the developers donate acreage and the city purchase additional land north of Cabrillo Boulevard for the expansion of Palm Park (see Figure 5). The response of the City Council to the Committee's alternative was mixed, with Councilman Richard Hidalgo defending the developers' right to do with their property what they wished. Despite this expressed skepticism towards the work of the Committee, the City Council passed a resolution which encouraged the Southern-Pacific American Communities to begin working with the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce, the city planning staff and the Committee to Save Santa Barbara to reach an agreement on hotel and conference center plans.¹⁵

In subsequent weeks the Committee and SP-AC representatives met to discuss the waterfront development. While relations first appeared harmonious, dissonant views soon formed. By mid-August of 1972, the Committee to Save Santa Barbara was challenging the development as being unsuitable for its location, referring to the provisions of the city's General Plan. Robert Easton, a co-chairman of the Committee, said that the project would "take away any chance for a park in the area because it would densify [sic] the seaward edge of the East Beach area."¹⁶ However, according to the 1971 General Plan Amendments, adopted on March 15, 1972, the Southern Pacific property was no longer viewed specifically as parkland. In an August 1972 interview

with Santa Barbara News-Press reporter Robert Sollen, Simon Eisner said of the General Plan changes regarding the East Beach area, "We always had in mind for that area a tourist oriented development." When asked by Sollen if that included hotel and motel development, Eisner replied in the affirmative.¹⁷

On August 15, 1972, Stewart Jaffe, president of American Communities Inc., formally presented the revised plans before the City Council, describing them as the key to the "renaissance" of the waterfront. Although Jaffe spoke of the project in glowing terms, a motion by Councilmen Gus Chavalas and Richard Hidalgo to endorse his plans was opposed by Councilmen A.Q. Eschenroeder and William Sayre, who felt that the project should be given greater consideration before a decision was made. Since the developers still needed approval from the Architectural Board of Review for their plans as well as a building permit, some Council members were not prepared to give even unofficial approval to the project, believing it would tie the hands of city agencies in the future.¹⁸

Another six months passed. In February 1973 the issue of the Southern Pacific-American Communities development plan resurfaced. On February 20 Stewart Jaffe and the Committee for Santa Barbara appeared before the City Council to present progress reports on their work. What transpired was similar to the events of August 1972. Robert Easton stressed that the aim of the Committee was to create a comprehensive development plan for the entire East Beach area and therefore it felt that piecemeal approvals

were unwise. The Council unanimously accepted the Committee's report, although Councilmen Hidalgo and Chavalas felt the Committee was interfering with the plans of the SP-AC. Jaffe, representing the developers, told the Council that his firm was proceeding with its plans despite the work of the Committee, which he accused of "sitting on its _____ since August" and having undertaken no real planning until recently. Jaffe stated that the SP-AC was to appear the next day before the South Central Regional Coastal Conservation Commission, whose only requirements were the submission of a grading and site plan along with "other data."¹⁹

One month later Jaffe met with the Committee for Santa Barbara and presented modified waterfront project plans. The new plans reflected the influence of community pressure against elements of the original design. The buildings in the original plans had been set close to Cabrillo Boulevard, but, in response to public criticism that they would thereby obstruct the view of the foothills from the boulevard and beach, the structures were moved 100 feet towards the freeway. In addition, the building design was changed from three long buildings, forming a wall, to six in tandem, with one lower side and a taller side of 45 feet, in order to create view corridors. The number of penthouses and commercial structures was reduced, although the number of rooms was to remain at 500, and the overpass to the beach was abandoned.²⁰

On April 23, 1973 Easton and Jaffe again came before the City Council to present status

reports on their projects. Easton announced that the Committee for Santa Barbara was working on a comprehensive plan for waterfront development. Paul Relis, also representing the Committee, repeated the point made two months earlier that any Council decision on the SP-AC project would be premature without a comprehensive plan for the entire waterfront region. He suggested that the Council clarify its position on the project prior to the meeting of the South Coast Regional Coastal Conservation Commission three days away. The Council responded by requesting that the Coastal Commission delay any action on the SP-AC project until the Council had reached a consensus on the matter.²¹ The next day Jaffe met with the Santa Barbara chapter of the American Institute of Architects and shared his frustrations in connection with the project. Jaffe said that the Council's latest delay ended a year of compromise, and that the next move for his firm would be to gain public support for the project.²² The actions of the Regional Coastal Commission the following afternoon proved to be another frustration for the developer, however, for it delayed a decision on the SP-AC development until the companies -- Hyatt Hotel and the SP-AC -- could demonstrate public support. Jaffe reminded the Commission that the SP-AC had received the City Council's conceptual approval the year before and that in fact no formal approval from the Council was needed, since the project was in compliance with city ordinances and the current zoning of that parcel.²³

At this point a city election brought in a new mayor, David Shiffman, and changed the

composition of the City Council. Councilman Eschenroeder, the group's lone environmentalist, did not run again, but two newly-elected councilmen, Nyle Utterback and Lawrence Schatz, were opposed to the development project. The new mayor and Council met for the first time on April 24, 1973, bringing a reluctance to proceed quickly with approval of the SP-AC plans.

At the next City Council meeting, on May 1, 1973, Robert Foreman, director of the Redevelopment Agency, proposed that his staff conduct a comprehensive study for the development of the central city which would include an assessment of the Southern Pacific property. Paul Relis added that the Committee for Santa Barbara would be willing to work with the Redevelopment Agency on such a comprehensive plan. Newly-seated Councilmen Nyle Utterback and Lawrence Schatz requested that the Planning Commission make certain that the SP-AC project would be consistent with the city's General and Specific Plans and determine the extent of the city's jurisdiction in reviewing the development plans. Utterback repeated his request concerning the review of the SP-AC plans at the Council meeting on May 8. In addition, the Council asked Southern Pacific to erect poles on the project site to indicate the location, size and height of the proposed structures. On May 22, the City Council passed a resolution "affirming the necessity for presentation of an EIR (environmental impact report) for the proposed American Communities and Southern Pacific project adjacent to West Cabrillo Blvd." Furthermore, the Council directed the city attorney to write the

SP-AC asking that poles be set up to simulate the proportions of the project.²⁴

While the city was trying to define its power to review the SP-AC project, the Regional Coastal Commission voted to take the East Beach development off its calendar. The Commission wanted the developers to acquire new City Council approval of their plans, since the design had changed substantially from that proposed in February of 1972. At the next City Council meeting on May 29, 1973 Utterback requested that the Council clarify its position on the waterfront development and inform the Regional Coastal Commission that it neither approved nor disapproved of the SP-AC's conceptual plans. In addition, the city attorney was asked to repeat the Council's request that the SP-AC set up project simulation poles. Jaffe refused to comply with this request, however, because he felt this method of simulation would not accurately depict the project's proportions. He proposed instead that the company construct a scale model of the hotel-conference center for the Council.²⁵

June 1973 began much the way May had ended. On June 7 the City Council and Stewart Jaffe began a new round of sparring over the issue of project simulation poles. More important was the Council's action that month directing the Planning Commission to answer three questions regarding the hotel and conference center project. They were:

- I. Whether there is any significant question as to the appropriateness

of the General Plan land use indication of "hotel and residential" in this area.

II. Whether the hotel project, as proposed or with certain changes, could be constructed at this time without seriously compromising or eliminating important options in the development of the specific plan for the area in response to the current General Plan provisions.

III. Appropriate controls on zoning to apply to the subject lands bounded by the freeway, Milpas Street, Cabrillo Boulevard and Santa Barbara Street to give the City the right to review and approve development plans for individual projects in the area to assure their consistency with the General Plan and with whatever specific plans have been adopted. The "subject lands," approximately 115 acres, are owned by Southern Pacific (70%±) and the City of Santa Barbara (sewage treatment plant primarily). The remainder is in various private ownerships.²⁶

By the end of the month the developers had become increasingly concerned over the delay of the City Council in making a decision on the SP-AC project. Joseph J. Amoroso, executive vice president of the Hyatt Corporation, warned that further delays might cause the developers to stop the project.²⁷

The Planning Commission findings on the SP-AC development were printed in the Santa Barbara News-Press on June 10, 1973. The Commission found that most aspects of the proposed plan were consistent with the General Plan: the project could be constructed so as not to eliminate any desirable planning options, and the present location of the railroad tracks probably would not compromise future planning. In addition, the Commission concluded that

a hotel, consistent with the concerns of Santa Barbara and responsive to the needs and desires of Hyatt-American Communities, can and should be developed now. This particular proposal may not be the best solution...Certainly it does not need to wait for a year or two for completion of the Central City Redevelopment plans. With a sincere desire to cooperate by the City, Hyatt-American Communities and Southern Pacific, a solution can be agreed upon within an acceptable time schedule.²⁸

Drawbacks to the current plan were also discussed, such as the elimination of Palm Park expansion, and the visual obstruction that would be created by the location and configuration of the buildings. The report concluded by reaffirming the creation of a hotel and conference center on Southern Pacific land as a "valid planning objective," and by recommending that the city create a zoning category for such multi-purpose activities, and decide whether or not to expand Palm Park.²⁹

On July 3, 1973 the City Council discussed the SP-AC project, received the Planning Commission's report, and scheduled a public hearing on the project to take place in thirty days. In addition, members of the Committee for Santa Barbara and the Citizens' Planning Association appeared before the Council to demonstrate support for the Planning Commission's recommendations, and the SP-AC conceptual design, respectively.³⁰ A week later, the environmental impact report (EIR) for the SP-AC project was submitted to the Council. The report was written by the developers and reviewed by the City Environmental Hearing Officer, Paul D. Nefstead. He was aided in the review process by the city's traffic, engineering and water departments, by David R. Williams Jr., professor of earth science at Santa Barbara City College, and by Joseph Lafferty, the vice president and treasurer of Aero Spacelines. The EIR analyzed the 22-acre development in terms of population growth, geological conditions, consistency with the city's planning goals and the impact of the man-made lake. Population, demands on public services and housing, and the tax base were all predicted to increase if the SP-AC project was carried out. The Council accepted the EIR, but delayed a decision on the project until July 24.³¹

A comprehensive plan for East Beach development was announced on July 14 by the Committee for Santa Barbara. The Committee's plan called for the development of 75 percent of the 115 acres of waterfront land, the relocation of Cabrillo Boulevard and the prohibition of automobiles along the boulevard. A man-made

lake, park center, plaza, Chumash village, and motel and conference center of modest size were called for.³² Ten days later still another plan for waterfront development, the joint effort of the City Park and Recreation Commissions, was presented to the public. This proposal showed the realignment of Cabrillo Boulevard but did not include a hotel and conference center. According to Bruce Thompson, City Planning Director, the plan was devised with the creation of parkland in mind. While this alternative plan was being discussed, the City Council's decision on the SP-AC project was again delayed for a week.³³ At its meeting on July 31 the Council voted five to two to defer a decision on the waterfront project until planning and zoning issues related to the development were resolved. With that action, Stewart Jaffe asserted that the developers would have to review past events and determine the project's current status.³⁴

On August 7, 1973 the City Planning Director appeared before the Council to discuss the Park and Recreation Commissions' proposed development plan for the waterfront area. Thompson stated that although the plan stressed the use of Southern Pacific property for recreational purposes, it would not exclude the construction of a hotel and conference center on that land. Six days later, as part of its central city study, the Redevelopment Agency held an evening public hearing to permit residents to voice their opinions on all East Beach development. Both support and opposition to development were expressed, as well as confusion about the various project plans. One woman warned against the development of a "beautiful piece of coastline"

into "schlock mercados."³⁵ In addition to this hearing, a special meeting was scheduled for Friday, August 24, to discuss and resolve the SP-AC issue. However, on the Tuesday before the meeting the City Council informed Mayor David Shiffman that a special session had never been scheduled, although the possibility had been discussed. The Council, in a controversial step, delayed action on the project until the Redevelopment Agency's plan for the central city was completed.

Response to the Council's delay was mixed. A group called the Friends of Santa Barbara, described by its president Andrew T. Petersen as a "representative cross section of business, labor, professional, and agricultural interests," accused the Council of obstructing the SP-AC project. The group charged that the City Council's mandate was to "set policies through which our area can continue to warrant its reputation for beauty and at the same time keep our economy healthy," and not to "preside over the decay of some of our most valuable assets." The Committee for Santa Barbara rebuffed the Friends, insisting that the Council was acting with the best interest of the city in mind. The response of the developers to the delay was more direct. On September 7, 1973 the Hyatt Corporation called the project to a halt.³⁶

Prospects for the revival of East Beach development soon began to surface, however. On October 2, 1973 Mayor David Shiffman informed the entire Council that he and Councilmen Utterback and Chavalas had met with Joseph Amoroso of the Hyatt Corporation, who indicated

that the Hyatt was still interested in the project. Shiffman and Chavalas then moved to direct the Redevelopment Agency to report to the Council on the SP-AC project within sixty days. The motion failed five votes to two, however, due to Councilman Utterback's argument that the real issue was whether or not the project was appropriate for its proposed site, and his insistence that the Redevelopment Agency should work on its study without pressure from the Council.³⁷ In late November, 1973, hopes for the development of East Beach were rekindled when O.G. Linde, president of Southern Pacific Land Company, appeared before the Council. He announced that Southern Pacific was still interested in the project, even though American Communities had decided to withdraw, and stated that he was unsure about the Hyatt's plans. Linde expressed his company's willingness to change its plans to complement other activities on East Beach, and was willing to listen to community comments on the project. Despite this overture from the developers, the City Council was still unwilling to proceed with any action on the project until the Redevelopment Agency's plan was completed.³⁸

During the next few years the hotel and conference center project virtually disappeared from the news, although important steps were taken. In February 1974, O.G. Linde announced that his company was unofficially continuing with plans for a waterfront development, and that Prudential Insurance Company was interested in the project.³⁹ More importantly, during that year the Central City Redevelopment Plan

was released. The Redevelopment Agency's comprehensive development study proposed five alternative plans for the central city, including the waterfront. The report described the visual impact of the East Beach as "one of ugliness -- considerably out of character with the Santa Barbara image." Four of the five plans called for a hotel and conference center. The planning consultants viewed the construction of such a complex, "done properly and executed in a manner consistent with Santa Barbara standards...to be very much in the community's best interest."⁴⁰

In 1975 the hotel and conference center plan was revived. During the first months of the year, Mayor Shiffman disclosed that he had held some private meetings with a Hyatt Corporation representative. The City Council did not approve such actions; however, the Mayor assured his colleagues that his office door had been open during these meetings, and that he would inform the Council of all future discussions with the developers.⁴¹ Prospects for the creation of a hotel and conference center improved when Southern Pacific and the Hyatt Corporation released new preliminary plans for the waterfront project on March 24, 1975. The plans depicted a 500-room hotel along a man-made lake. The buildings were divided into segments and set back on the property. Two ballrooms were planned, one accommodating 1,000 guests and the other 500, along with a major restaurant. Tennis courts were to be located north of the lake with a parking area for 750 cars below. One entrance from Cabrillo Boulevard would provide access to the complex. The relocation of Cabrillo

Boulevard was not part of the plan, but Joseph Amoroso of the Hyatt Corporation said that the developers would willingly sell land to the city for the expansion of Palm Park.⁴²

Seven months later, in October, 1975, the Santa Barbara News-Press ran an editorial recommending that, since a legal dispute between the Southern Pacific and American Communities, which had been delaying progress, had been settled, the city government should assume leadership in the matter and resolve the issue of East Beach development. The newspaper, which had favored the project from its beginning, said of the current situation, "we should be able to achieve unity and enthusiasm for a program that will transform a forgotten section of the city into one of our finest civic areas and most valuable attractions."⁴³

A little over a year after this statement, Mayor Shiffman announced that the Hyatt Corporation was ready to propose a new hotel and conference center plan. On November 30, 1976 Southern Pacific and the City Council discussed the project's plan. O.G. Linde said that "parcel B," the twenty-one acres of land bounded by extensions of Carpinteria Street on the west and Salsipuedes Street on the east, would be the site for the hotel and conference center. Hyatt had acquired an option on the land west of Carpinteria Street and extending further west to Santa Barbara Street, designated as "parcel A." Any development undertaken on the property east of Salsipuedes Street and bounded on the east by Milpas Street and on the northeast by

Punta Gorda Street, parcels C and D, would involve two other option holders. In addition, the Southern Pacific Land Company intended to dedicate 1.58 acres of land to the city for Palm Park.⁴⁴

On December 4, 1976, three days before the official Southern Pacific-Hyatt plans were disclosed, concern over the location of the complex was voiced by the Committee for Santa Barbara and the Citizens' Planning Association. Both groups felt that the proposed plans would block the future expansion of Palm Park.⁴⁵ Despite these objections the revised hotel and conference center plans were presented to the City Council on December 7. The proposal was for a 500-room hotel and 1,000-seat conference center. The hotel units were arranged in segments around an eight acre man-made lake, buildings were set back 75 feet from Cabrillo Boulevard, and they were limited in height to two stories, or 30 feet. Three restaurants were to serve the guests. Recreation facilities included three pools, a golf course and twelve tennis courts. Six hundred parking spaces were to be located under the tennis area. Paul Relis of the Committee for Santa Barbara said he supported the design of the hotel but would like to see the structures located further to the east to free up land for park expansion, and the number of rooms reduced to 400. With the exception of Council member Sheila Lodge, elected in 1975 on a platform calling for close growth controls, the Council was satisfied with the plans and granted conceptual approval of the project on a four to one vote.⁴⁶

With this step, the developers' activity accelerated. The only obstacle to the project's progress now was whether or not the City Council wanted to expand Palm Park. If so, the developers would have to alter their site plans for the hotel. The Committee for Santa Barbara challenged the new plans on the ground that they were inconsistent with the General Plan, the Redevelopment Plan, the Shoreline Master Plan, the proposed Park and Recreation Master Plan, and the recommendations of the State Coastal Commission Plan. The Committee was not opposed to the development of the complex, but favored construction of a smaller hotel and, more importantly, wanted the project site moved eastward, closer to Punta Gorda Street, in order to allow for Palm Park expansion.⁴⁷

A perceptible shift in Council opinion had taken place by the January 11, 1977 City Council meeting. The resolution approving the Southern Pacific-Hyatt plans was rescinded and unanimous support was given to the new conceptual plans of a 400-room hotel, located nearer to Punta Gorda Street and Cabrillo Boulevard, subject to the findings of an environmental impact report and necessary approvals. In agreeing to this request to move their scaled-down hotel eastward, the developers told the Council that the Southern Pacific roundhouse, a structure considered by some to be of historical importance, would have to be removed. Southern Pacific announced that to move the plan eastward another option holder would have to be brought into the discussion.⁴⁸

ENDNOTES

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1. Social Process Research Institute (hereafter SPRI), Cultural Resources Technical Report for the Park Plaza Development Area (Santa Barbara, 1979), pp. 6-7; Owen H. O'Neill, History of Santa Barbara County (Santa Barbara, Harold McLean Meir, 1939), pp. 222, 283; Walker A. Tompkins, Santa Barbara Past and Present (Santa Barbara: Schauer Printing Co., 1975), p. 86; Rebecca Conard, "From Private Philanthropy to Public Resort: Waterfront Tourism and Recreation, 1920s to the Present" (Paper, Public Historical Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara [hereafter UCSB], 1979), pp. 3-4; Judith A. Ryder, "Santa Barbara's Best Kept Secret: Industry and Commerce in the Harbor Area" (Paper, Public Historical Studies, UCSB, 1979), p. 13.

2. SPRI, pp. 8-11, 15-17; Paul Relis and Kathleen Sullivan, "East Beach, Fifty-Year Struggle," Survival Times 3:1 (1973), p. 3.

3. SPRI, p. 12.

4. Ibid.

5. Relis and Sullivan, p. 3.

6. Charles H. Cheney and Olmsted Brothers, Major Traffic Street Plan Boulevard and Park System (Santa Barbara: Plans and Planting Committee, 1924), p. 34.

7. Relis and Sullivan, p. 7; SPRI, p. 13.

8. Simon Eisner and Associates, General Plan Report (Santa Barbara: City Planning Commission, 1964), p. 33.

9. Simon Eisner and Associates, Recommended Amendment to the General Plan of the City of Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara: City Planning Commission, 1971), pp. 99-104.

10. Ibid., p. 45.

11. Ibid., p. 46.

12. "Beachfront, Freeway Matters Will Get Council's Attention," Santa Barbara News-Press (hereafter SBNP), 14 February 1972; "Beach Promenade Concept Endorsed," SBNP, 16 February 1972; Santa Barbara, City Council Minutes (hereafter CCM), 15 February 1972. In the News-Press article of February 16, 1972, Councilman Frank Arguillas was quoted as describing the SP-AC plan as "a wonderful program -- I don't see anyone working adversely at it." Similarly, Councilman Richard Hidalgo said, "I'm just thrilled about this and want to go on record supporting at least the first phase." It was already apparent by early January 1972, however, that the Southern Pacific was going to develop its property. "Problem Boosts Cost of Freeway," SBNP, 5 January 1972; "Railroad Asks More Study on Treatment Plant," SBNP, 12 January 1972.

13. "Developers Set To Go On Beachfront Project," SBNP, 8 August 1972.

14. Relis and Sullivan, pp. 11-12.

15. "Two East Beach Plans," SBNP, 9 August 1972; CCM, 8 August 1972.

16. "Group to Oppose E. Beach Project," SBNP, 15 August 1972.

17. "Cabrillo Project Plan 'Compatible,'" SBNP, 20 August 1972.

18. CCM, 15 August 1972; SBNP, 16 August 1972.

19. CCM, 20 February 1973; "Councilmen Vent Annoyance at Waterfront Planning Report," SBNP, 21 February 1973.

20. "Plan for Beach Hotel Center Modified, Jaffe Tells Group," SBNP, 20 March 1973.

21. CCM, 24 April 1973.

22. "Architects Hear Frustration in Cabrillo Complex Planning," SBNP, 26 April 1973.

23. "Conservation Unit Delays Decision on Hotel Center," SBNP, 27 April 1973.

24. CCM, 1 May 1973; 8 May 1973; 22 May 1973. The cost of the pole simulation was to be assumed by the city. At the May 22nd meeting figures were presented on the cost of such an undertaking. The project would require 24 poles and 50 weather balloons at \$250 and \$100 apiece, respectively.

25. CCM, 29 May 1973; "Coastal Unit Won't Consider Center Until City Approves It," SBNP, 25 May 1973; "Too Much To-do Over Hotel Project, Mayor Tells Council," SBNP, 30 May 1973.

26. Santa Barbara, City Planning Commission, Planning Considerations Proposal for Hyatt Regency-American Communities Hotel Development on Southern Pacific Property, 21 June 1973; "Planning Report Details Cabrillo Blvd. Project," SBNP, 10 June 1973.

27. "Conference Center Developers Warn Council on Delays," SBNP, 30 June 1973.

28. City Planning Commission, Planning Considerations Proposal, 21 June 1973.

29. Ibid.; SBNP, 10 June 1973.

30. CCM, 3 July 1973; "Hearing on Beachfront Hotel to Wait at Least 30 days," SBNP, 4 July 1973.

31. CCM, 10 July 1973; American Communities, Southern Pacific and Hyatt Regency House, Environmental Impact Report (10 July 1973); "Report Says Hotel Would Add 1,200 to Population of City," SBNP, 11 July 1973; "Hotel Impact Report Gets Local Review," SBNP, 25 May, 1973; In the May 25 article Paul D. Nefstead, the City Environmental Hearing Officer, said of this development's impact on population and public services, "They all add a bit to traffic, beach crowds, airport traffic, etc. None is significant in itself, but it could be considered

significant; in total as a slight degradation of quality of life in the community."

32. "Alternative Proposal Ready for Cabrillo Development," SBNP, 15 July 1973; Relis and Sullivan, p. 13.

33. CCM, 24 July 1973; "City Parks Plan Leaves Hyatt Hotel Center Out," SBNP, 25 July 1973.

34. CCM, 31 July 1973; "Hyatt Hotel Project 'Unlikely' After Council Votes Delay," SBNP, 1 August 1973.

35. CCM, 7 August 1973; "Park Plan 'Won't Block Hotel,'" SBNP, 8 August 1973; "Residents Found Uncertain About Plans for Beachfront," SBNP, 14 August 1973. According to the August 14 article, representatives from the two consulting firms involved in the Redevelopment Agency study were also present. The representatives were Lyle Stewart of Patterson, Lanford and Stewart of Medford, Oregon, and Roberta Mundie of Gruen and Gruen in San Francisco.

36. "City Council to Review Proposed Beach Project," SBNP, 21 August 1973; "No Special Meeting on Hotel, Mayor Learns From Council," SBNP, 22 August 1973. "Hotel, Conference Center Project Off," SBNP, 7 September 1973.

37. "Hyatt May Still be Interested in Hotel Center, Shiffman Says," SBNP, 3 October 1973; CCM, 2 October 1973.

38. CCM, 26 November 1973; "SP Land Firm Ready to Develop Property," SBNP, 26 November 1973; "Council, SP Staff Discuss Development," SBNP, 27 November 1973.

39. "Hotel Project Still Alive, SP Land Co. Official Says," SBNP, 6 February 1974.

40. CCM, 14 August 1974; Santa Barbara, City Redevelopment Agency, Santa Barbara's Central City -- Choice for the Future, 12 August 1974, p. 5.

41. CCM, 21 January 1975; "Hyatt Controversy Resurfaces in Council," SBNP, 21 January 1975; "Missing Drawing Pondered in Council-Mayor Dispute," SBNP, 12 February 1975.

42. "Plans for 500-room Hotel Unveiled," SBNP, 25 March 1975.

43. "Leadership on SP Site," SBNP, 3 October 1975.

44. CCM, 26 October 1976; "Conference Center Plan is expected," SBNP, 27 October 1976; CCM, 30 November 1976; "Another Option Disclosed by SP for Cabrillo Land," SBNP, 1 December 1976.

45. "Site Change is Sought in Hotel Plan," SBNP, 5 December 1976.

46. CCM, 7 December 1976; "City Council Approves Hyatt Hotel Concept," SBNP, 7 December 1976.

47. "City Urged to Seek Hotel Site Change,"
SBNP, 10 January 1977; "City Staff 'Madly'
Seeking Palm Park Recommendation," SBNP, 11
January 1977.

48. CCM, 11 January 1977; "New Site for
Hyatt Hotel, Palm Park Expansion OKd," SBNP,
12 January 1977.